

What is claimed is:

1. A method, comprising:
at a health care facility:
generating data representative of dispensed items;
transmitting said data to a central database;
automatically assembling a purchase order from said data;
transmitting the purchase order to a distributor; and
at a distributor location:
assembling the items, in each item's manufacturer packaging,
identified in said purchase order; and
shipping the assembled items to the healthcare facility.
2. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising, before transmitting said purchase order, manually reviewing said purchase order.
3. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising using the shipped items to replenish a restocking location at the health care facility.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said assembled items are shipped in a tote, said method additionally comprising marking said tote with a bar code.
5. The method of claim 4 additionally comprising notifying the healthcare facility of the bar code and identifying the items in the tote associated with said bar code.
6. A method, comprising:
generating data representative of items dispensed in a healthcare facility;
transmitting said data to a central database;
automatically assembling one or more purchase orders from said data, wherein each said purchase order represents items from one or more locations within in a restocking location; and
transmitting the purchase order to a distributor.
7. The method of claim 6 additionally comprising, before transmitting said purchase order, manually reviewing said purchase order.
8. The method of claim 6 additionally comprising:
at a distributor location:

assembling the items identified in said purchase order; and
shipping the assembled items to the healthcare facility.

9. The method of claim 8 additionally comprising using the shipped items to replenish said one or more locations within the restocking location at the healthcare facility.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said assembled items are shipped in a tote, said method additionally comprising marking said tote with a bar code.

11. The method of claim 10 additionally comprising notifying the healthcare facility of the bar code, and identifying the items in the tote associated with said bar code and said one or more locations.

12. A method, comprising:
at a health care facility:

dispensing medical items from a decentralized storage location;
automatically generating data representative of the dispensed items;
transmitting said data to a central database;
automatically generating a restocking order from said data;
generating a restocking package at a restocking location from said
restocking order;

restocking said decentralized storage location with said restocking
package;

automatically assembling a purchase order from said data;
transmitting the purchase order to a distributor; and

at a distributor location:

assembling the items, in each item's manufacturer packaging,
identified in said purchase order; and

shipping the assembled items to the healthcare facility; and
at said healthcare facility, replenishing said restocking location with said
shipped items.

13. The method of claim 12 additionally comprising, before transmitting said purchase order, manually reviewing said purchase order.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein said assembled items are shipped in a tote, said method additionally comprising marking said tote with a bar code.

15. The method of claim 14 additionally comprising notifying the healthcare facility of the bar code and identifying the items in the tote associated with said bar code.

16. A method, comprising:

at a health care facility:

- dispensing medical items from a decentralized storage location;
- automatically generating data representative of the dispensed items;
- transmitting said data to a central database;
- automatically generating a restocking order from said data;
- generating a restocking package at a restocking location from said

restocking order;

- restocking said decentralized storage location with said restocking package;

- automatically assembling one or more purchase orders from said data, wherein each said purchase order represents items from one or more locations within a restocking location;

- transmitting the purchase order to a distributor; and

at a distributor location:

- assembling the items identified in said purchase order; and
- shipping the assembled items to the healthcare facility; and

at said healthcare facility, replenishing said restocking location with said shipped items.

17. The method of claim 16 additionally comprising, before transmitting said purchase order, manually reviewing said purchase order.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein said assembled items are shipped in a tote, said method additionally comprising marking said tote with a bar code.

19. The method of claim 18 additionally comprising notifying the healthcare facility of the bar code and identifying the items in the tote associated with said bar code and said one or more locations to be replenished.

20. A system for dispensing, restocking and reordering medical items in a healthcare facility, comprising:

a plurality of decentralized locations, each containing dispensing hardware for dispensing items and for generating data representative of the dispensed items;

a central database for receiving said data, said central database generating restocking orders for restocking each decentralized location and for generating purchase orders in response to said data;

restocking hardware, responsive to said restocking orders, said restocking hardware having a plurality of storage locations; and

an online data exchange system responsive to said purchase orders for communicating said purchase orders to a distributor, wherein each said purchase order is responsive to items needed to replenish one or more of said plurality of storage locations.

21. The system of claim 20 wherein said restocking hardware includes a carousel and said plurality of storage locations correspond to shelves of said carousel.

22. The system of claim 20 additionally comprising a bar coded tote for carrying items identified in a purchase order.

23. The system of claim 22 additionally comprising a distributor computer for notifying the healthcare facility of the bar code and for identifying the items in the tote carrying said bar code and said one or more storage locations to be replenished.

24. The system of claim 22 wherein items in the tote are in their original manufacturer packaging.